

2.6 VISUAL/AESTHETIC RESOURCES

2.6.1 Affected Environment

The natural features and viewsheds of the area have an appropriately symbolic role in the design of the city of Washington. Lafayette Park and the White House grounds were designed to offer reciprocal views from the White House area along the seven streets that radiate out from the site.

The study area for visual quality analysis covers a central portion of the original L'Enfant Plan and contains many important visual/aesthetic resources. Because views of the streets within the White House area rapidly diminish or are obscured by trees and modern construction, visual impacts would be negligible beyond the area where the vehicular traffic restrictions occurred. The study area for visual quality analysis encompasses the White House Complex.

2.6.2 Impacts Analysis

The restriction of vehicular traffic resulted in the following impacts to the visual environment:

- Removal of traffic from Madison Place and Pennsylvania Avenue, combined with the earlier restriction on Jackson Place. The security action unifies Lafayette Square with the White House. The visual intrusion of high-density urban automobile and truck traffic and tour-bus parking has been removed from these streets, resulting in a more pleasing visual environment and in improved reciprocal lines of sight to the White House and the historic properties along Madison and Jackson Place from the Lafayette Square area.
- Placement of barriers near the intersections of Pennsylvania Avenue with 17th and 15th Streets and at the intersection of H Street with Madison Place and Jackson Place, and on the sidewalk along the north side of Lafayette Square. These barriers provide an adverse visual impact in those areas. These barriers are temporary, and will be replaced by a system of permanent security barriers in conjunction with the National Park Service's Long Term Design Plan for Pennsylvania Avenue.
- Placement of the barriers in sections along E Street, to allow traffic to proceed eastbound while prohibiting entry onto the westbound lanes, and at the intersection of State Place and 17th Street and across South Executive Avenue and E Street. These temporary concrete barriers detract from the visual environment in the Ellipse, the southern section of the White House grounds. A combination of concrete barriers and planters is placed along portions of the center line on E Street, across State Place at 17th Street, and where South Executive Avenue intersects E Street. The barriers are also placed along the sidewalk on the north side of E Street west of South Executive Avenue and north along the east side of 17th Street to State Place, and east of East Executive Avenue and north along the west side of 15th Street to Hamilton Place. The barriers intrude upon the viewshed that includes the White House south lawn, and the south face of the Treasury Building and the Sherman Monument, the south face of the Executive Office Building, and the First Division Monument, and provide an adverse visual impact. A design proposal is being prepared for the replacement of the temporary barriers now placed along E Street and State Place.

The NPS is developing a Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House that includes the entire

area from H Street to Constitution Avenue and 15th to 17th Streets. This plan will, among other things, address the preservation of the historic integrity and character of the monumental buildings and landscapes.